

# Agenda

## Downtown Economic Growth Authority

### Board of Directors



City of Kalamazoo

Monday, June 16, 2025

3:00 PM

Main Conference Room at Community Planning and Economic Development

#### A. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

##### 1. Purpose Statement:

The purpose of this Downtown Development Authority is to halt property value deterioration and promote economic growth within its business district, to increase property value.

*The purpose of this Downtown Economic Growth Authority is to correct and prevent deterioration in residential, commercial, and industrial areas, to authorize the acquisition and disposal of interests in real and personal property; to authorize the creation and implementation of development plans and development areas.*

The Kalamazoo DDA and DEGA, acting in concert, have set forth the strategic objective of focusing its resources on improving “The First 16 Feet”, a three-dimensional volume of space including buildings ground floor façade, the frontage that exists between the façade and the common space, and the common space that provides access to and through the district.

#### B. ADOPTION OF FORMAL AGENDA

#### C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. Approval of the minutes from the meeting of the Downtown Economic Growth Authority Board on May 19, 2025. (**Action: Motion to approve**)

#### D. REPORTS AND PRESENTATIONS

1. Financial Report - April 2025
2. Committee Reports
3. Downtown Report

**E. DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS**

1. DDA/DEGA Strategic Plan 2025-2027 DRAFT
2. 2025 Holiday Lighting

**F. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

**G. DIRECTOR COMMENTS**

**H. ADJOURNMENT**

## **Board of Directors Regular Meeting Minutes**

May 19, 2025, 3 p.m. | Community Planning & Economic Development, 245 N Rose Street

**PRESENT:** David Anderson, Jeff Breneman, Trisha Kidd, Clarence Lloyd, Rick Searing

**EXCUSED:** Curt Aardema, Stanley Steppes, Jessica Thompson

**ABSENT:** Kwame Gyimah

**STAFF:** Meghan Behymer (Downtown Coordinator); Erin Hahn (Community Investment Administrative Assistant); Rebekah Kik (Deputy City Manager); Jessica Wood (Legal Counsel)

**OTHER:**

### **A. CALL TO ORDER**

**DIRECTOR BRENEMAN CALLED THE MEETING TO ORDER AT 3:04 P.M.**

**PRESENT:** David Anderson, Jeff Breneman, Trisha Kidd, Clarence Lloyd, Rick Searing

**EXCUSED:** Curt Aardema, Stanley Steppes, Jessica Thompson

**ABSENT:** Kwame Gyimah

**THE MAY 19, 2025 ATTENDANCE INCLUDING EXCUSED AND UNEXCUSED ABSENCES IS RECORDED.**

**DIRECTOR SEARING MOTIONED TO EXCUSE THE ABSENCE OF DIRECTORS WHO NOTIFIED THE BOARD OF THEIR ABSENCE IN ADVANCE. DIRECTOR LLOYD SECONDED. NO OBJECTIONS. MOTION CARRIED.**

### **B. ADOPTION OF FORMAL AGENDA**

**DIRECTOR LLOYD MOTIONED TO ADOPT THE MAY 19, 2025 AGENDA AS PRESENTED. DIRECTOR SEARING SECONDED. NO OBJECTIONS. MOTION CARRIED.**

### **C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**MAYOR ANDERSON MOTIONED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FROM THE DOWNTOWN ECONOMIC GROWTH AUTHORITY BOARD MEETING ON APRIL 21, 2025. DIRECTOR LLOYD SECONDED. NO OBJECTIONS. MOTION CARRIED.**

### **D. REPORTS AND PRESENTATIONS**

# Board of Directors Regular Meeting Minutes

May 19, 2025, 3 p.m. | Community Planning & Economic Development, 245 N Rose Street

## 1. Financial Report – March 2025

Meghan Behymer, Downtown Coordinator, presented the March 2025 financial report. DEGA received no revenue in March, keeping year-to-date revenue at \$0. Expenses totaled \$115,946, including \$31,795 for the Ambassador Program and Bigbelly, \$1,400 for strategic planning, \$31,250 for Q1 City Service Agreement, \$50,000 for Beats on Bates, and \$1,501 in legal fees. Year-to-date expenses total \$153,876.

**DIRECTOR LLOYD MOTIONED TO ACCEPT THE FINANCIAL REPORT. DIRECTOR SEARING SECONDED. NO OBJECTIONS. MOTION CARRIED.**

## 2. Committee Reports

Behymer presented the following committee updates:

- a. **Events and Marketing Committee** is evaluating several sponsorship requests, refining the sponsorship process, and advancing discussions on a holiday lighting support request. The committee also participated in the kick-off of the downtown branding initiative with consultants from a5 Branding & Digital.
- b. **Business Recruitment & Retention Committee** met for the first time in several months. The group revisited the marketing piece, with a goal of finalizing it to engage developers. They discussed analyzing successful retail models, referencing the Bob Gibbs study, and exploring strategies from the 2017 plan. Topics included circulation and parking, mall and Michigan Avenue recommendations, and coaching opportunities.
- c. **Clean & Green Committee** was unable to meet this month and is rescheduling for May 28 to discuss the Ambassador Program RFP. Director Lloyd raised concerns about addressing the gap in the proposed scope increase. Behmer responded that once the agreement is signed, they'll reevaluate to identify non-negotiables and true cost needs. Director Lloyd suggested identifying service costs to potentially bring in partners.
- d. **Executive and Finance Committee** met to review the May board agendas and discuss the broader strategic direction of the Authorities.

## 3. Downtown Report

Behymer shared the following program updates:

- Downtown Ambassadors collected over 11,000 pounds of litter in April, completed power washing, prepared the Arcadia Creek Festival Place for transition to Parks & Recreation, and redeployed three Bigbelly units to the

## Board of Directors Regular Meeting Minutes

May 19, 2025, 3 p.m. | Community Planning & Economic Development, 245 N Rose Street

Kalamazoo Mall. Ambassadors have also started tracking litter found on the ground to better monitor cleanup needs.

The Bigbelly expansion project is moving forward, with 26 new units scheduled for installation by mid-to-late July, bringing the total number downtown to 51. Four existing units will also be relocated. Director Breneman asked whether temporary waste solutions would be in place for the large event weekend in June. Director Lloyd inquired about trash removal near the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts and the Arts Council. Staff noted that those responsibilities fall to the respective organizations but agreed to provide guidance and clarify expectations.

Downtown beautification efforts are ongoing, including partnerships for native plantings, new tree installations, mulch refresh in Bates Alley, and tree trimming. Director Searing asked about reopening the other end of Bates Alley, and Director Lloyd asked who is leading that project. Behymer will follow up with additional information.

Regarding parking, Director Searing raised concerns about morning parking availability near Caffe Casa, and Mayor Anderson inquired about parking for restaurants such as Rustica and Principle. Behymer stated that staff is collecting feedback and will continue to make adjustments. Director Breneman suggested providing signage for businesses to display parking information.

The WMU Economic Vitality Study is being refined in collaboration with downtown businesses to improve survey design and reduce the time between data collection and reporting.

In the Downtown Dollars program, the number of certificates sold is currently down, but redemptions have increased. Behymer confirmed there are no administrative fees for participating businesses. Director Lloyd suggested the creation of a downtown newsletter to share regular updates and opportunities. Behymer noted this is identified as a need in the strategic plan.

Lastly, in the Ambassador Report, Director Searing asked about an observed increase in unhoused individuals downtown. Behymer indicated this reflects a seasonal trend and is being evaluated weekly. Mayor Anderson raised concerns about biohazardous materials and the possible need for an additional public restroom. Behymer will consult with the City Manager's Office, review prior-year

# Board of Directors Regular Meeting Minutes

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data, and assess whether current cleaning data aligns with potential locations for another public facility.

## 4. Beats on Bates 2025 (Kim Guess)

Kim Guess provided an update on *Beats on Bates*, returning every Wednesday from June 4 to September 24, 2025. Now Kalamazoo's most attended free live music series, the event will feature a diverse lineup of performers, live DJs, and local vendors in Bates Alley. The 2025 season includes 12 sponsors, with new support from Jack 106.5, which will provide live community updates and pre-event promotion.

Vendors and downtown retailers were personally invited to participate at no cost. Guess encouraged businesses to engage by setting up in the alley or offering special promotions. Director Searing expressed concern about encouraging businesses to close during the event, suggesting not all can step away from storefronts. Guess clarified that participation is optional and that businesses can engage in other ways, such as offering coupons or having a representative present.

Five new bands with strong followings from Detroit, Grand Rapids, Chicago, and Muskegon will be featured. Attendance data from Discover Kalamazoo will help track engagement, and past data informed this year's bookings. Guess noted that local bars saw revenue increases of 25–35% during last year's series.

Improvements to the pavilion space are being explored for the 2026 season.

## 5. Downtown Placemaking and Imagine Kalamazoo 2035 (Rebekah Kik)

Deputy City Manager Rebekah Kik presented an update on *Imagine Kalamazoo 2035*, with a focus on the upcoming Downtown Design It Meeting. She outlined the planning phases and invited input on topics and speakers relevant to downtown's future.

Director Lloyd suggested covering nightlife planning, the State Theatre vacancy and its impact on downtown as an arts hub, and strategies to engage young professionals. Director Breneman recommended identifying a model city to illustrate what Kalamazoo could look like in 6–7 years. Director Lloyd also emphasized the need to educate and support retailers, referencing retail strategy expert Bob Gibbs.

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Director Searing proposed looking at successful retail models in other cities to fill vacancies and highlighted the importance of creating more third spaces. Director Breneman also recommended including best practices around safety, mobility, homelessness, and University-downtown integration.

Director Kidd cited Fort Wayne, Indiana as an example of a city that has successfully revitalized its downtown. Board members recommended hosting the Design It sessions in September to better engage students and emphasized making events focused, efficient, and actionable to respect participants' time.

### **E. ACTION ITEMS**

There were no action items.

### **F. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

There were no public comments.

### **G. DIRECTOR COMMENTS**

There were no director comments.

### **H. ADJOURNMENT**

Director Breneman adjourned the meeting at 4:43 P.M.

**Downtown Economic Growth Authority  
April 2025 Financial Summary**

In April, the Downtown Economic Growth Authority (DEGA) received \$916,037 in revenue. Revenue streams included: taxes (\$874,337), sponsorship revenue from Arts Council of Greater Kalamazoo (\$1,700) and City contributions to support the Bigbelly expansion (\$40,000). Year-to-date revenues are \$916,037.

April expenses totaled \$38,573. Key expense categories included: **Professional and Contractual Services (\$31,795)** for the Ambassador Program (\$28,220) and Bigbelly (\$3,575); **Consultant Services and Fees (\$2,000)** for website hosting; **Professional Development (\$155)** for new board member onboarding materials; and **Legal Services (\$4,623)**. Year-to-date expenses total \$192,450.

**Downtown Economic Growth Authority**  
**Statement of Activity**  
**4/30/2025**

**Total Available Cash** 1,016,443

|  | <u>2025 Budget</u> | <u>April</u>   | <u>2025 YTD Actuals</u> |
|--|--------------------|----------------|-------------------------|
| <b>Revenues</b>                        |                    |                |                         |
| Taxes                                  | 883,600            | 874,337        | 874,337                 |
| Other Revenue                          | 82,000             | 1,700          | 1,700                   |
| Private Contributions and Sponsorships | 21,700             |                | -                       |
| Contributions from COK                 | 40,000             | 40,000         | 40,000                  |
| Transfers                              |                    |                | -                       |
| Charges For Services                   |                    |                | -                       |
| Interest And Rentals                   | -                  |                | -                       |
| <b>Total Revenues</b>                  | <b>1,027,300</b>   | <b>916,037</b> | <b>916,037</b>          |
| <b>Expenses</b>                        |                    |                |                         |
| Operating Supplies                     | 2,004              |                | -                       |
| Professional And Contractual Services  | 502,448            | 31,795         | 98,961                  |
| Solid Waste Disposal                   | 7,500              |                | 404                     |
| Communication And Network Services     | 576                |                | -                       |
| Repairs And Maintenance Services       | 2,000              |                | -                       |
| Consulting Services And Fees           | 55,150             | 2,000          | 2,000                   |
| Audit Fees                             | 13,800             |                | -                       |
| Legal Services                         | 30,000             | 4,623          | 6,162                   |
| Memberships And Subscriptions          | 3,000              |                | 1,550                   |
| Professional Development               | 13,000             | 155            | 2,123                   |
| Administrative Fees                    | 125,000            |                | 31,250                  |
| Promotion And Advertisting             | 10,000             |                | -                       |
| Contribution To General Fund           | 20,000             |                | -                       |
| Community Promotion                    | 114,850            |                | 50,000                  |
| Interest Expense - Notes Payable       | 52,400             |                | -                       |
| <b>Total Expenses</b>                  | <b>951,728</b>     | <b>38,573</b>  | <b>192,450</b>          |
| <b>Revenues Less Expenses</b>          | <b>75,572</b>      | <b>877,464</b> | <b>723,587</b>          |

**Notes:**

**Long Term Debt:**

|                   |           |
|-------------------|-----------|
| Mavcon Agreement  | TBD       |
| City of Kalamazoo | 1,060,000 |

**Professional And Contractual Services:**

|  | <u>April</u>  | <u>2025 YTD Actuals</u> |
|--|---------------|-------------------------|
| Recycling Services - BIG BELLY SOLAR LLC | 3,575         | 14,300                  |
| Ambassador Services - BLOCK BY BLOCK     | 28,220        | 84,661                  |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                             | <b>31,795</b> | <b>98,961</b>           |

**Community Promotion:**

|                                     |          |               |
|-------------------------------------|----------|---------------|
| Beats on Bates Events - Sponsorship |          | 50,000        |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                        | <b>-</b> | <b>50,000</b> |

**Downtown Economic Growth Authority & Downtown Development Authority  
June 2025 Committee Reports**

The **Events and Marketing Committee** approved funding for Canadiana Festival and Caribbean Festival and advanced a \$25,000 holiday lighting recommendation, with a request for more involvement in future holiday lighting RFP processes.

The **Business Recruitment and Retention Committee** discussed incentive strategies, long-term funding models, and peer/aspirational city approaches to support downtown retail and restaurant growth.

The **Clean and Green Committee** discussed potential shifts to the Ambassador program scope to align with Board-approved budget.

The **Executive and Finance Committee** reviewed June board materials, discussed strategic priorities for 2025–2026, and explored funding opportunities, vision alignment, and program capacity needs.

### Message from Downtown Coordinator

Summer is in full swing in Downtown Kalamazoo. From JumpstART weekend to the return of Beats on Bates, the season is off to a vibrant start. We're making progress—with alley activations and expanded recycling infrastructure—while partnering on long-term efforts like the Portland Loo and sustainability initiatives. Thank you for being part of what makes downtown thrive.

*— Meghan Behymer*



### Ambassador Program

In May, the Downtown Ambassador team removed over 9,000 pounds of trash and 575 pounds of litter, completed 58 restroom cleanings, and provided 33 hospitality assists to support a cleaner, safer downtown. The team also pressure washed the entirety of the Kalamazoo Mall—including all tree planters—and refreshed Bates Alley with new mulch and layout prep ahead of Beats on Bates.

**Program led by:** [Meghan Behymer \(Downtown Coordinator\)](#)

### Portland Loo

To address the need for additional public restrooms downtown, the Kalamazoo City Commission approved the purchase of a Portland Loo in early June 2025. The Portland Loo will take approximately 18 weeks to arrive, with full installation taking place 37 weeks after site selection.

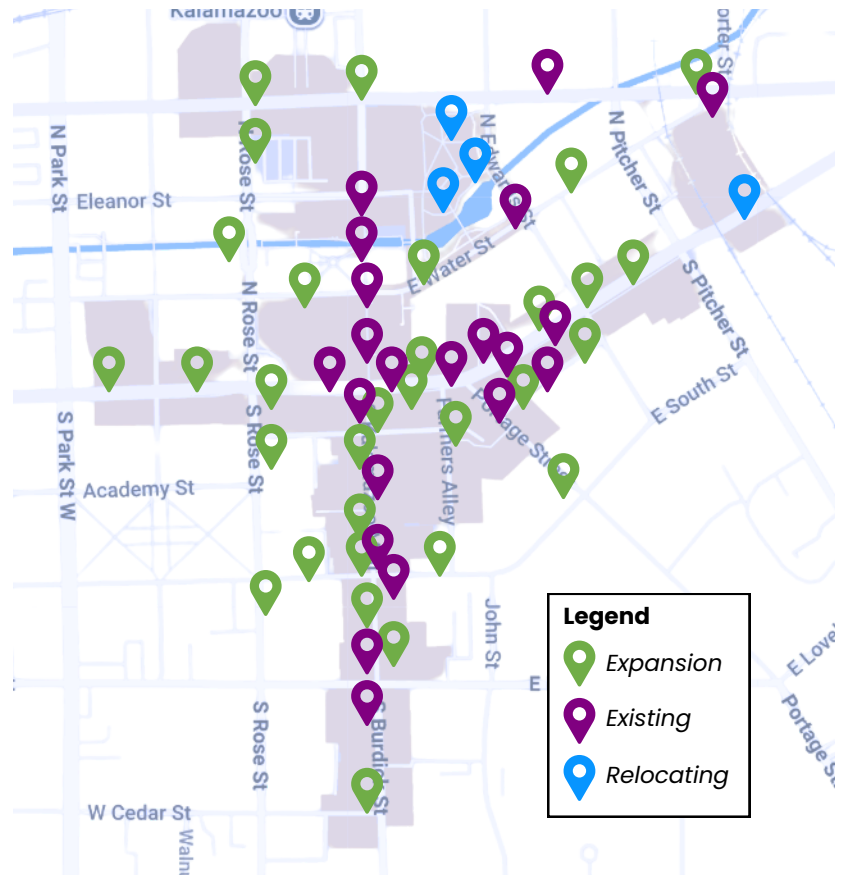
While the City conducts a pilot using temporary restrooms at three locations outside the DDA boundary (June–November), DDA/DEGA Board and staff are working in partnership with the City to explore downtown district locations through business surveys, potential pilot testing, and site evaluations. A final recommendation is expected later this year.



## Bigbelly Waste & Recycling

The expansion of downtown's Bigbelly Waste & Recycling Program is moving forward. We are anticipating a mid- to late-July installation.

- **Adding 26 New Units:** Expanding the network to 51 units will provide coverage and efficiency for collection
- **Relocating 4 Existing Units:** Optimizing placement based on waste patterns and pedestrian traffic will enhance service effectiveness
- **Unlocking Revenue Opportunity:** Next, we will build an advertising and sponsorship model to leverage Bigbelly as a sustainable, revenue-generating asset.



## New Sustainability Initiative: WMU Student Intern Partnership to Improve Public Recycling

In partnership with Western Michigan University student interns with the City of Kalamazoo, this no-cost pilot program enhances the effectiveness of downtown recycling through research-driven behavior change. Contamination—when non-recyclables are placed in recycling bins—reduces material value and increases processing costs. This initiative seeks to address that challenge.

- **Live Waste Audits:** WMU student researchers will conduct real-time audits at our Farmer's Alley recycling location to identify contamination trends.
- **Smart, Photo-Based Signage:** Audit findings will inform clear, behavior-based signage placed on recycling bins—helping users make the right choice at the point of disposal.

### Why This Matters

- Reduces contamination and improves recyclability of collected materials
- Decreases long-term costs for waste processing partners
- Strengthens Kalamazoo's reputation for innovation in urban sustainability
- Provides real-world learning for students and strengthens university-city ties
- Unlocks future funding and sponsorship opportunities for waste and recycling improvements

This effort supports key goals of the DDA/DEGA by promoting a cleaner, more welcoming downtown and demonstrating fiscal and environmental stewardship.

**Program led by:** Meghan Behymer (Downtown Coordinator)



## Downtown Beautification

Downtown beautification efforts are nearly complete thanks to partnerships with the City's Parks & Rec, Forestry and Public Works departments, and Kalamazoo in Bloom.

Native plants (like the ones seen above) will brighten the Kalamazoo Mall, new trees will take root where old ones were lost, and Kalamazoo in Bloom filled Michigan Avenue with bursts of color.

**Project led by:** Meghan Behymer (Downtown Coordinator), Ashton Anthony (Deputy Director of Parks & Rec) and Hannah Whiteman (Landscape Coordinator)



Imagine Kalamazoo 2035 (IK2035) is all about engagement: engagement with citizens, community groups, businesses, developers, investors, philanthropists, government and YOU. We're imagining a vision for Kalamazoo's future – discussing it, planning it, designing it, and acting on it.

### "Plan It" Phase Wraps

Building on the input received during the "Imagine It!" phase, "Plan It" focused on confirming the strategic vision goals and establishing the community outcomes from these goals. Next up, "Design It!"

Updates can be found at: <https://www.kalamazoocity.org/Government/Programs-Initiatives/Imagine-Kalamazoo>

**Project led by:** Rebekah Kik (Deputy City Manager) and Christina Anderson (City Planner, Deputy Director of Community Planning and Economic Development)

## In the News

[See inside downtown Kalamazoo's new senior apartments, a \\$20M development](#)

[2 downtown Kalamazoo apartment projects get tax break for renovation](#)

['JumpstART Summer' with Pride, art and Do-Dah in downtown Kalamazoo](#)

[Kalamazoo redevelopment project seeks to transform old county courthouse into hotel](#)

## Upcoming Events

### **Beats on Bates**

*Bates Alley*

Every Wednesday, June - September, 5:30 - 8:30 p.m.

### **Caribbean Festival**

*Arcadia Creek Festival Place*

June 27 - 28, 2025

### **Black Arts Festival**

*Bronson Park*

July 12, 2025



Southwest Michigan First Chamber

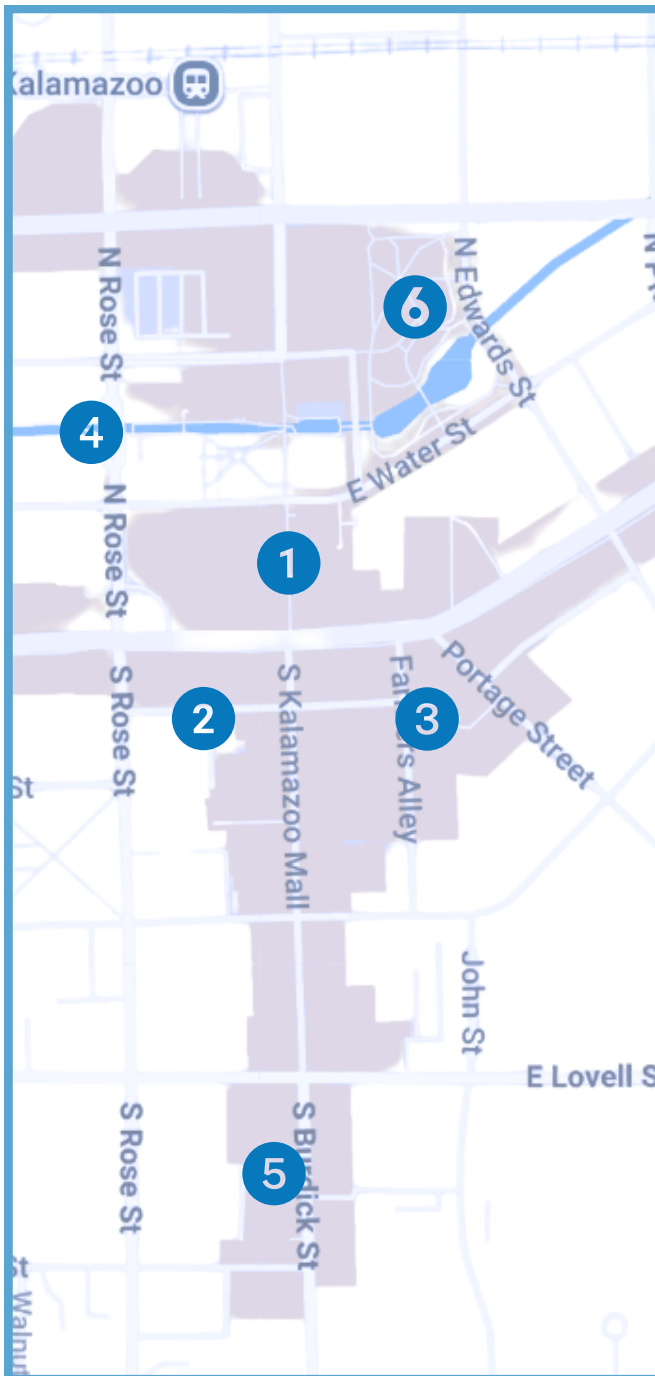
### **Downtown Kalamazoo Business Townhall**

July 8, 2025 @ 2 p.m.

180 East Water Street  
Kalamazoo, Mich. 49007

## Downtown Placemaking

Downtown Placemaking seeks to add to the vibrancy with another alley activation, plaza redesigns that act as connectors, and enhancing the experience of the Kalamazoo Mall as a more active and engaging place.



**Project led by:** Rebekah Kik (Deputy City Manager), Christina Anderson (City Planner, Deputy Director of Community Planning and Economic Development), Patrick McVerry (Parks and Recreation); Dennis Randolph (Public Services), and Meghan Behymer (Downtown Coordinator)

- 1 North Kalamazoo Mall**  
Construction project - pending federal grant approval
- 2 Exchange Place**  
Mural project - pending property owner approval
- 3 Farmer's Alley**  
Project is moving forward with construction documents to improve the concrete plaza, lighting, and landscaping.
- 4 Rose Street Plaza**  
Project is moving forward with construction documents to improve the concrete plaza with furniture and landscaping. Coordination currently underway with adjacent property owners to partner on improvements on the public/private areas.
- 5 South Burdick (Lovell to Cedar)**  
Currently on hold awaiting budget or grant opportunity.
- 6 Arcadia Creek Festival Place**  
ACFP is undergoing a major renovation to improve infrastructure such as electrical and landscaping, supported by \$3.6 million in grants from the MEDC and City Commission, with additional funding being pursued for the \$14M project. Design focus groups were held in April with community input, and a public meeting was held in early June to share proposed design recommendations.

## Kalamazoo Streets for All

Kalamazoo Streets For All is a lane conversion project that will transform downtown Kalamazoo into a welcoming, inclusive and vibrant destination that offers safe travel for all modes of transportation.

Updates can be found at: <https://www.kalamazoocity.org/Community/Projects/Streets-for-All>



**Project led by:** Rebekah Kik (Deputy City Manager), Christina Anderson (City Planner, Deputy Director of Community Planning and Economic Development), and James Baker (Director, Public Services) with Consultants from Progressive AE, C2D, and Wightman Engineering

## Parking Plan Implementation

The Parking Blueprint is organized into four sections defined by the following shared strategic objectives: (1) expanding parking supply/capacity; (2) managing parking demand; (3) improving/expanding mobility options; and (4) improving parking operations.

### 2025 Planned Changes:

- **Upgrade Meters:** Replace outdated meters with smart tech; decide on meter type, payment options, and quantity.
- **Adopt Tiered Rates:** Update pricing model to reflect demand and include evening enforcement zones.
- **Improve Accessibility:** Address gaps in barrier-free parking per 2024 inventory and code standards.

**Project led by:** Led by Rob Bacigalupi (Mission North Consulting) with City staff Christina Anderson (Planning); Dennis Randolph (Public Services); and Rebekah Kik (City Manager's Office Liaison)

## GUD Marketing

The GUD Marketing Consulting for Streets and Parking is to support the communication, marketing and branding of the City's Streets for All project.

**Project led by:** Led by Manny Garcia and Brooke Gieber (GUD Marketing) with City staff Christina Anderson (Planning); Neal Conway and Michael Smith (Communications); Dennis Randolph (Public Services); Meghan Behymer (Downtown Coordinator); and Rebekah Kik (City Manager's Office Liaison)

## WMU Economic Vitality Study

The WMU Economic Vitality Study is a collaborative research initiative between the City of Kalamazoo and Western Michigan University designed to better understand the economic health of Downtown Kalamazoo. The study aims to evaluate short- and long-term impacts of major downtown infrastructure projects, business activity trends, and the effectiveness of public investments.

- Third quarterly downtown business-focused survey closed in mid-April
- City staff are taking strategic efforts to improve the survey in collaboration with downtown businesses, enhance communication and outreach efforts, and shorten period between data collection and report.

**Study led by:** Center for Transportation and Livability at Western Michigan University – Dr. Jun Oh with City staff Christina Anderson (Planning); Dennis Randolph (Public Services); Meghan Behymer (Downtown Coordinator); and Rebekah Kik (City Manager’s Office Liaison)

## Downtown Dollars

May saw \$1,425 Downtown Dollars spent locally and \$3,740 in new purchases—supporting 19 of our businesses!

| Month             | # of Businesses that Redeemed DT\$ (% of total) | Total Sold     | Total Spent    |
|-------------------|---|----------------|----------------|
| <b>January</b>    | 20 (38%)  | \$935          | \$1,785        |
| <b>February</b>   | 18 (34%)  | \$620          | \$850          |
| <b>March</b>      | 17 (30%)  | \$785          | \$1,190        |
| <b>April</b>      | 23 (41%)  | \$900          | \$2,740        |
| <b>May</b>        | 19 (34%)  | \$3,740        | \$1,425        |
| <b>June</b>       |   |                |                |
| <b>July</b>       |   |                |                |
| <b>August</b>     |   |                |                |
| <b>September</b>  |   |                |                |
| <b>October</b>    |   |                |                |
| <b>November</b>   |   |                |                |
| <b>December</b>   |   |                |                |
| <b>2025 TOTAL</b> | <b>31 (55%)</b>                                 | <b>\$6,980</b> | <b>\$7,990</b> |

### May 2025 Stats

**\$3,740**

SOLD

↑ 30% vs. May 2024

**\$1,425**

SPENT

↑ 13% vs. May 2024

### Program Life Stats

**\$517K**

SOLD

**\$363.5K**

SPENT

**\$135.3K**

IN CIRCULATION

**Program led by:** Chelsie Downs-Hubbarth (Community Investment Manager), Meghan Behymer (Downtown Coordinator)



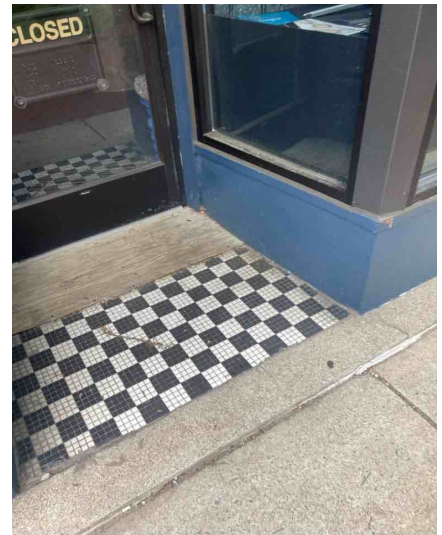
# DOWNTOWN KALAMAZOO

## AMBASSADOR PROGRAM

MAY 2025 REPORT



# AROUND TOWN IN MAY



# MAY 2025 HIGHLIGHTS



## Bates Alley





Mulch was delivered to Bates Alley on May 22 and the team got to work. Cutting down the ornamental grass and raking out the beds was done first. Fresh mulch was spread in the beds all the way down the alley and around the stage. Grasses were removed and transplanted to make space for a new Big Belly as well.

After the Alley was cleaned up the gray tables and chairs were put out in time for Beats on Bates to start

| <b>May 2025 Stats By Zone</b>     |      |                |       |      |             |  |
|-----------------------------------|------|----------------|-------|------|-------------|--|
|                                   | East | Kalamazoo Mall | North | West | Total       |  |
| <b>CLEANING</b>                   |      |                |       |      |             |  |
| Abandoned Property                | 147  | 58             | 39    | 32   | <b>276</b>  |  |
| Area Cleaned                      | 21   | 18             | 3     | 5    | <b>47</b>   |  |
| Biohazardous Material             | 38   | 13             | 5     | 3    | <b>59</b>   |  |
| Restroom Cleaned/Stocked          | 58   |                |       |      | <b>58</b>   |  |
| Graffiti - Removed                | 25   | 18             | 2     | 8    | <b>53</b>   |  |
| Lawn Care (hours)                 |      | 6              |       |      | <b>6</b>    |  |
| Leaf Removal (hours)              |      |                |       |      | <b>0</b>    |  |
| Power Washing (hours)             | 16   | 35             | 0     | 0    | <b>51</b>   |  |
| Snow Removal (hours)              |      |                |       |      | <b>0</b>    |  |
| Litter (lbs)                      | 225  | 175            | 50    | 125  | <b>575</b>  |  |
| Trash (lbs)                       | 3075 | 4075           | 1125  | 950  | <b>9225</b> |  |
| Flower Watering (gallons)         |      |                |       |      | <b>0</b>    |  |
| Weed Abatement (block faces)      | 6    | 1              | 0     | 3    | <b>10</b>   |  |
| Special Project (hours)           | 30   |                |       |      | <b>30</b>   |  |
| <b>HOSPITALITY</b>                |      |                |       |      |             |  |
| Business Contact                  | 0    | 3              | 0     | 1    | <b>4</b>    |  |
| Hospitality Assistance            | 15   | 11             | 3     | 4    | <b>33</b>   |  |
| <b>SAFETY</b>                     |      |                |       |      |             |  |
| Observed Visible Alcohol/Drug Use | 3    | 1              | 3     | 0    | <b>7</b>    |  |
| Interaction With Alcohol/Drug Use |      |                |       |      | <b>0</b>    |  |
| Needles Found                     | 3    | 3              | 2     | 0    | <b>8</b>    |  |
| Panhandling - Aggressive          | 0    | 1              | 0     | 0    | <b>1</b>    |  |
| Panhandling - Passive             | 0    | 1              | 0     | 6    | <b>7</b>    |  |
| Public Defecation/Urination       |      |                |       |      | <b>0</b>    |  |
| Safety Escorts                    |      |                |       |      | <b>0</b>    |  |
| <b>OUTREACH</b>                   |      |                |       |      |             |  |
| Transient                         | 10   | 65             | 54    | 15   | <b>144</b>  |  |
| Unhoused/Sleeping                 | 57   | 37             | 56    | 7    | <b>157</b>  |  |
| Unsheltered Relocation            | 3    | 1              | 0     | 0    | <b>4</b>    |  |


# KDP Zone Map

**KDP Zones**

-  Kalamazoo Mall
-  North
-  West
-  East


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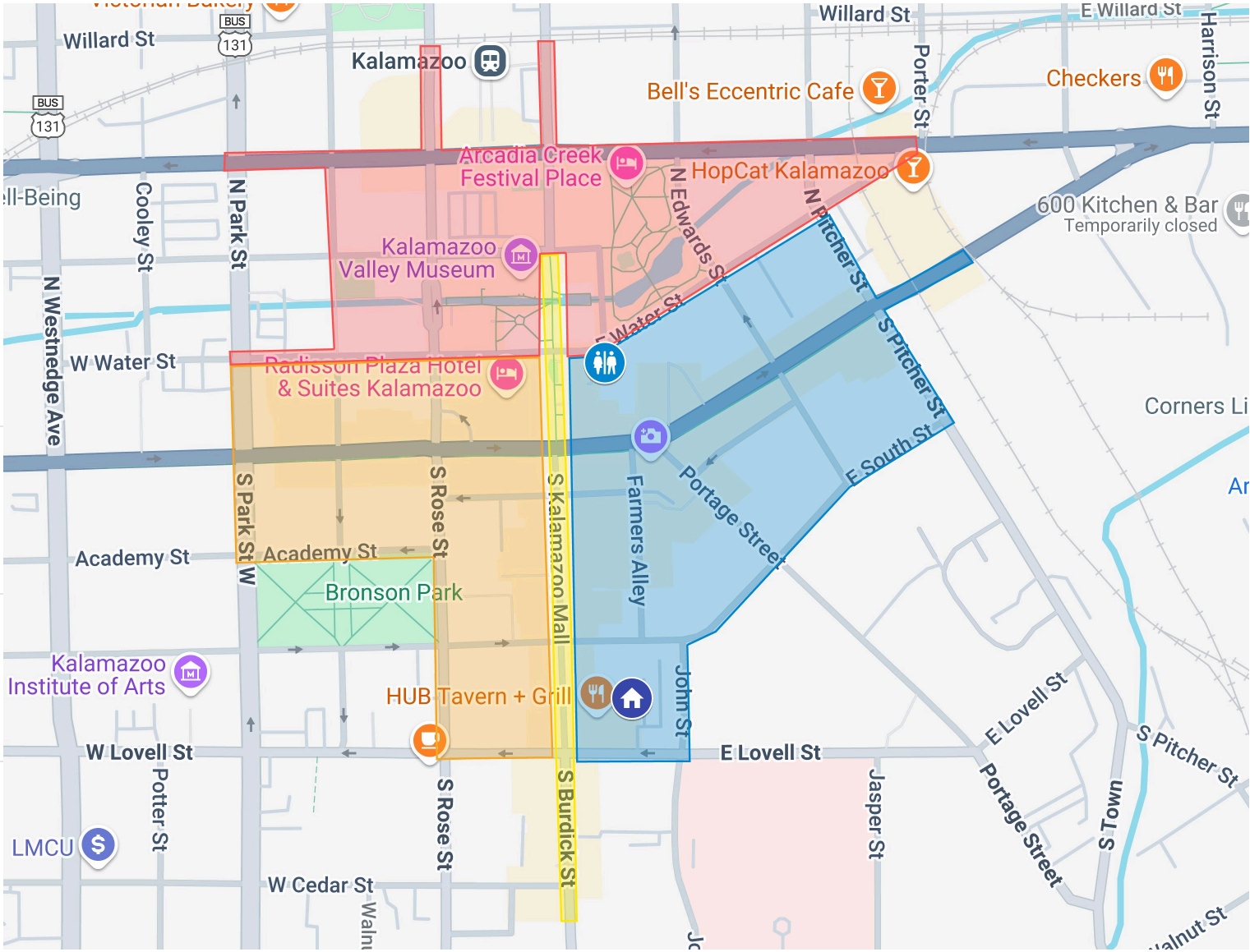
**Restroom**

-  Portland Loo

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**Operations Center**

-  Operations Center



**2025 STATISTICS**

|                                   | January | February | March | April | May  | June | July | August | September | October | November | December | Total |
|-----------------------------------|---------|----------|-------|-------|------|------|------|--------|-----------|---------|----------|----------|-------|
| <b>CLEANING</b>                   |         |          |       |       |      |      |      |        |           |         |          |          |       |
| Abandoned Property                | 119     | 201      | 301   | 433   | 276  |      |      |        |           |         |          |          | 1330  |
| Area Cleaned                      | 27      | 39       | 105   | 43    | 47   |      |      |        |           |         |          |          | 261   |
| Biohazardous Material             | 36      | 40       | 42    | 56    | 59   |      |      |        |           |         |          |          | 233   |
| Restroom Cleaned/Stocked          | 23      | 41       | 50    | 55    | 58   |      |      |        |           |         |          |          | 227   |
| Graffiti - Removed                | 20      | 31       | 95    | 103   | 53   |      |      |        |           |         |          |          | 302   |
| Lawn Care (hours)                 |         |          |       |       |      |      |      |        |           |         |          |          | 0     |
| Leaf Removal (hours)              | 6       | 4        | 10    |       | 6    |      |      |        |           |         |          |          | 26    |
| Power Washing (hours)             |         |          |       | 44    | 51   |      |      |        |           |         |          |          | 95    |
| Snow Removal (hours)              | 122     | 38       |       |       |      |      |      |        |           |         |          |          | 160   |
| Litter (lbs)                      |         |          |       | 1175  | 575  |      |      |        |           |         |          |          | 1750  |
| Trash (lbs)                       | 6800    | 5775     | 8425  | 10200 | 9225 |      |      |        |           |         |          |          | 40425 |
| Flower Watering (gallons)         |         |          |       |       |      |      |      |        |           |         |          |          | 0     |
| Weed Abatement (block faces)      |         |          |       | 11    | 10   |      |      |        |           |         |          |          | 21    |
| Special Project (hours)           |         | 1        | 9     |       | 30   |      |      |        |           |         |          |          | 40    |
| <b>HOSPITALITY</b>                |         |          |       |       |      |      |      |        |           |         |          |          |       |
| Business Contact                  | 27      | 41       | 16    | 18    | 4    |      |      |        |           |         |          |          | 106   |
| Hospitality Assistance            | 43      | 25       | 41    | 47    | 33   |      |      |        |           |         |          |          | 189   |
| <b>SAFETY</b>                     |         |          |       |       |      |      |      |        |           |         |          |          |       |
| Observed Visible Alcohol/Drug Use | 11      | 12       | 12    | 41    | 7    |      |      |        |           |         |          |          | 83    |
| Interaction With Alcohol/Drug Use |         |          | 7     | 11    |      |      |      |        |           |         |          |          | 18    |
| Needles Found                     | 5       |          |       | 7     | 8    |      |      |        |           |         |          |          | 20    |
| Panhandling - Aggressive          |         |          |       | 1     | 1    |      |      |        |           |         |          |          | 2     |
| Panhandling - Passive             |         | 1        |       | 1     | 7    |      |      |        |           |         |          |          | 9     |
| Public Defecation/Urination       | 1       |          |       |       |      |      |      |        |           |         |          |          | 1     |
| Safety Escorts                    | 1       | 8        | 1     | 3     |      |      |      |        |           |         |          |          | 13    |
| <b>OUTREACH</b>                   |         |          |       |       |      |      |      |        |           |         |          |          |       |
| Transient                         | 28      | 24       | 53    | 114   | 144  |      |      |        |           |         |          |          | 363   |
| Unhoused/Sleeping                 | 110     | 94       | 206   | 296   | 157  |      |      |        |           |         |          |          | 863   |
| Unsheltered Relocation            | 30      | 9        | 12    | 28    | 4    |      |      |        |           |         |          |          | 83    |

# STRATEGIC PLAN



# 2025-2027

Downtown Development Authority &  
Downtown Economic Growth Authority

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# Executive Summary

Downtown Kalamazoo is entering a transformational era. With major infrastructure improvements underway, a changing business landscape, and growing public-private collaboration, the Downtown Development Authority (DDA) and Downtown Economic Growth Authority (DEGA) have developed a focused three-year strategic roadmap to lead this momentum with intention, equity, and resilience.

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## Our Vision

A thriving downtown where people feel welcome, businesses grow, and place inspires purpose.

## Our Mission

To shape a vibrant and welcoming downtown through strategic leadership, strong partnerships, and purposeful investment.

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## Six Strategic Pillars - Downtown is ...

- **Built for Business:** A destination for growth—where businesses are rooted, visible, and thriving.
  - **Clean, Safe & Welcoming:** A place you want to be—inviting, well cared for, and safe for all.
  - **Place with Purpose:** Shaped with intention—where every corner, plaza, and park reflects community and connection.
  - **Streetwise & Connected:** A place that moves with people—intuitive, walkable, and easy to explore.
  - **Strong & Sustainable:** Backed by strong leadership—resilient in structure, bold in vision, and prepared for what’s next.
  - **Vibrant & Visible:** Unmistakable—distinct in identity, celebrated in stories, and recognized for its energy and edge.
- 

*This roadmap is Phase 1 of a broader 10-year strategy. The work completed between now and 2027 will position Downtown for a bold and community-driven future—built on equity, collaboration, and shared purpose.*

## Three-Year Implementation Timeline

### 2025 Build the Foundation

Launch business newsletter, design guidelines, new Ambassador program, branding strategy, onboarding systems

### 2026 Scale & Strengthen

Expand programs, implement streetscape and signage improvements, finalize placemaking guidelines, grow outreach tools

### 2027 Embed & Evaluate

Evaluate results, continue physical upgrades, refine plan for 2028–2035

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## Measuring Impact

Each pillar includes Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to track progress. These include metrics like:

- Business retention & recruitment
- Public perception of safety & cleanliness
- Brand awareness & social engagement
- Implementation of design standards
- Board succession & operational resilience

# Introduction

Downtown Kalamazoo is ready to rise to the moment. As the city embraces unprecedented infrastructure investments, reimagines its streetscapes, and supports a diversifying business community, the DDA/DEGA in concert have created a three-year strategic roadmap to lead through this momentum and transformation.

This roadmap is more than a plan—it's a shared commitment to people-centered planning, operational excellence, and bold, equitable leadership.

**The plan is organized around six strategic pillars:**

- **Built for Business**
- **Clean, Safe & Welcoming**
- **Place with Purpose**
- **Streetwise & Connected**
- **Strong & Sustainable**
- **Vibrant & Visible**

The roadmap outlines a phased approach: laying the foundation in 2025, scaling and implementing in 2026, and embedding long-term systems in 2027. Each goal is grounded in measurable outcomes, a strong equity lens, and flexible tools that allow the organization to pivot as needed.

With the collaboration of public, private, and institutional partners, Downtown Kalamazoo is building for today's needs and tomorrow's vision. This roadmap will guide how we connect people to place, align investments with values, and create a downtown built for everyone.

# Why We're Here

## Our Guiding Vision and Mission

Downtown Kalamazoo's future starts with a clear sense of purpose. The Downtown Development Authority (DDA) and Downtown Economic Growth Authority's (DEGA) vision, mission, and guiding beliefs reflect a shared commitment to equity, vibrancy, and collaboration. They are the foundation of this plan—and the filter through which every goal, partnership, and investment is shaped.

### Vision

*A thriving downtown where people feel welcome, businesses grow, and place inspires purpose.*

### Mission

*To shape a vibrant and welcoming downtown through strategic leadership, strong partnerships, and purposeful investment - all grounded in equity and shared prosperity.*

### Guiding Beliefs & Assumptions

We believe that transformation is rooted in people, place, and trust. These core beliefs shape how the DDA and DEGA approach our work:

- **Downtown is everyone's neighborhood.** It must be inclusive, safe, and reflective of community values.
- **Walkability and public space matter.** The "First 16 Feet" principle shapes vibrant streetscapes and supports local businesses.
- **Strategic alignment leads to greater impact.** Coordination with existing community plans and partners is essential.
- **Organizational strength enables long-term transformation.** Capacity-building and funding diversity are foundational.
- **Public trust is built through visibility, responsiveness, and collaboration.**

# What We're Building From

This roadmap is not a standalone plan—it is embedded within a broader ecosystem of adopted strategies that shape Downtown Kalamazoo's future. Together, they ensure that efforts are visionary, financially actionable, and built to last:

| Guiding Plan                              | Description  |
|---|--|
| <b>Imagine Kalamazoo 2025</b>             | <i>Sets the long-range vision for the city, emphasizing vibrant neighborhoods, public space activation, and inclusive economic opportunity. The plan prioritizes walkability, access, and downtown as a gathering place for all.</i>   |
| <b>City Economic Development Strategy</b> | <i>Guides the city's approach to business growth, talent attraction, and innovation. It reinforces Downtown as a regional economic hub and a key driver of inclusive prosperity.</i>   |
| <b>DEGA TIF and Development Plan</b>      | <i>Provides the implementation backbone for physical improvements and economic development. It outlines eligible funding categories—including mobility, placemaking, infrastructure, and business support—and establishes the financial tools that allow this strategy to move from ideas to action.</i> |

## Building on the 2022 DDA/DEGA Strategic Framework

This 2025–2027 Strategic Plan builds on the foundation laid by Yard & Company, which redefined the DDA/DEGA's approach to place-based development, governance, and collaboration.

Core concepts from the 2022 framework remain central:

- **First 16 Feet:** A people-first lens that shapes investments in seating, lighting, signage, and street-level activation, especially under Place with Purpose and Streetwise & Connected.
- **Ecosystem Alignment:** Clarifies the distinct roles of the DDA, DEGA, City, and civic partners to reduce duplication and maximize impact.
- **Internal Capacity:** Under Strong & Sustainable, this plan strengthens leadership, transparency, and financial flexibility to support DEGA's expanding role.
- **Brand Identity:** A phased rollout under Vibrant & Visible will align Downtown's messaging and engagement strategies.
- **Phased Implementation:** A three-phase timeline (2025–2027, 2028–2031, 2032–2035) supports sustained, scalable progress.
- **Measurement & Adaptability:** KPIs, annual reports, and a 2027 mid-cycle review ensure accountability and allow for strategic adjustments.



# Strategic Alignment Crosswalk

Downtown Kalamazoo's future is guided by a shared vision and coordinated action across local plans and partners. The following crosswalk illustrates how the DDA/DEGA Strategic Pillars align with board committee structure, the DEGA Development & TIF Plan, the City's 2024 Economic Development Strategy, and the Imagine Kalamazoo 2025 Strategic Vision to ensure cohesive, community-centered progress.

| <b>Strategic Pillar</b>            | <b>Aligned Committee</b>                    | <b>DEGA Development and TIF Priority Areas</b>  | <b>Kalamazoo Economic Development Strategy</b>   | <b>Imagine Kalamazoo 2025 Goals</b>  |
|------------------------------------|---|---|--|--|
| <b>Built for Business</b>          | <i>Business Recruitment &amp; Retention</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Development &amp; Project Support</li> <li>Economic Development Planning &amp; Research</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Foster the Business Environment &amp; Entrepreneurs</li> <li>Improve downtown experience</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Economic Vitality</li> <li>Shared Prosperity</li> </ul>                 |
| <b>Clean, Safe &amp; Welcoming</b> | <i>Clean &amp; Green</i>                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public Space Investment &amp; Maintenance</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advance Conditions for Growth</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Safe Community</li> <li>Complete Neighborhoods</li> </ul>               |
| <b>Place with Purpose</b>          | <i>Place Activation</i>                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Streetscape Improvements</li> <li>Public Space Investment &amp; Activation</li> </ul>              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advance Conditions for Growth</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inviting Public Places</li> <li>Environmental Responsibility</li> </ul> |
| <b>Streetwise &amp; Connected</b>  | <i>Streetscape</i>                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mobility Improvements</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strengthen Neighborhoods &amp; Community Connections</li> </ul>                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Connected City</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Strong &amp; Sustainable</b>    | <i>Executive &amp; Finance</i>              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Additional Programs, Services &amp; Administration</li> </ul>                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>N/A</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Good Governance</li> <li>Strength Through Diversity</li> </ul>          |
| <b>Vibrant &amp; Visible</b>       | <i>Events &amp; Marketing</i>               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Additional Programs, Services &amp; Administration</li> </ul>                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advance Conditions for Growth</li> <li>Improve downtown experience</li> </ul>                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inviting Public Places</li> <li>Shared Prosperity</li> </ul>            |

# What Drives Change

## Six Pillars. One Vision.

Together, these six interconnected pillars form the foundation of a vibrant, inclusive, and forward-moving downtown—each one capturing a powerful vision for what Kalamazoo can become when people, place, and purpose align around equity.

### Built for Business

Downtown is a destination for growth—where businesses are rooted, visible, and thriving.

### Streetwise & Connected

Downtown is a place that moves with people—intuitive, walkable, and easy to explore.

### Clean, Safe & Welcoming

Downtown is a place you want to be—inviting, well cared for, and safe for everyone.

### Strong & Sustainable

Downtown is backed by strong leadership—resilient in structure, bold in vision, and prepared for what's next.

### Place with Purpose

Downtown is shaped with intention—where every corner, plaza, and park reflects community and connection.

### Vibrant & Visible

Downtown is unmistakable—distinct in identity, celebrated in stories, and recognized for its energy and edge.

# Theory of Change

## Imagine Kalamazoo 2025 Strategic Vision

The Strategic Vision is the overarching vision for the City, and its goals are as follows:

- Shared Prosperity* ● *Connected City* ● *Inviting Public Spaces*
- Environmental Responsibility* ● *Safe Community* ● *Youth Development*
- Complete Neighborhoods* ● *Strength Through Diversity* ● *Economic Vitality* ● *Good Governance*

## City of Kalamazoo Economic Development Strategy Community Vision

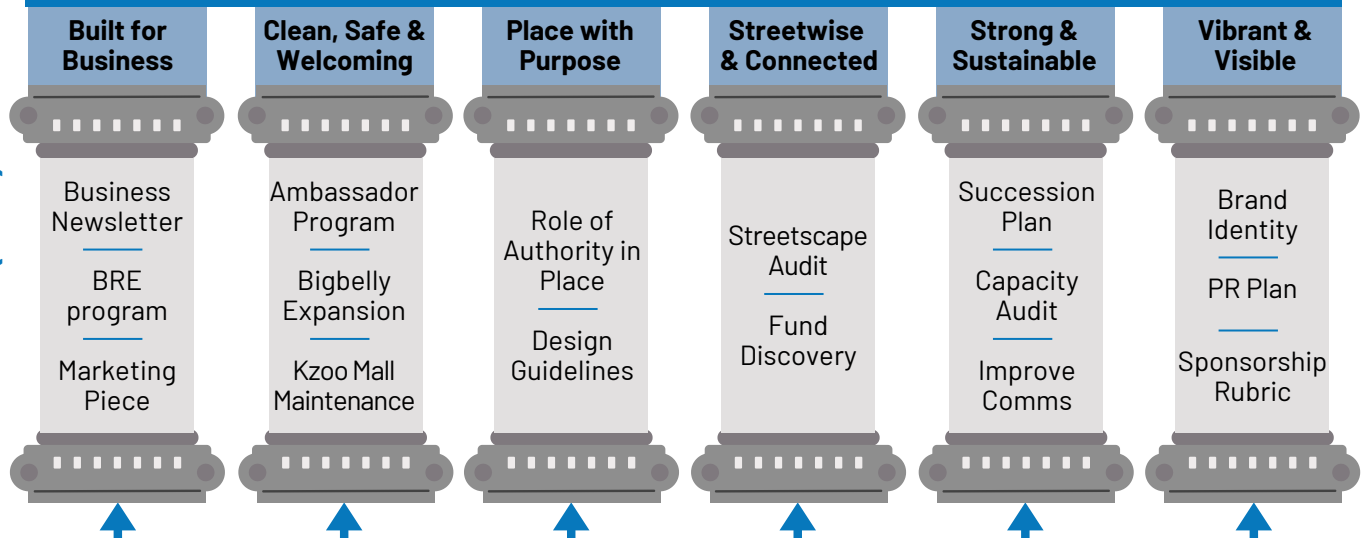
Thriving city for inclusive growth, attracting talent, catalyzing innovation, and fostering vibrant neighborhoods.

## DDA/DEGA Strategic Vision

A thriving downtown where people feel welcome, businesses grow, and place inspires purpose.

## OUTCOMES (STRATEGIC PILLARS): Downtown is ...

OUTPUTS (2025)



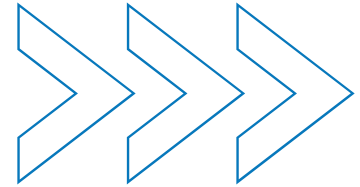
## Guiding Beliefs & Assumptions

- **Downtown is everyone's neighborhood.** It must be inclusive, safe, and reflective of community values.
- **Walkability and public space matter.** The "First 16 Feet" principle shapes vibrant streetscapes and supports local businesses.
- **Strategic alignment leads to greater impact.** Coordination with existing community plans and partners is essential.
- **Organizational strength enables long-term transformation.** Capacity-building and funding diversity are foundational.
- **Public trust is built through visibility, responsiveness, and collaboration.**

## DDA/DEGA Mission

To shape a vibrant and welcoming downtown through strategic leadership, strong partnerships, and purposeful investment - all grounded in equity and shared prosperity.

# 3-Year Work Plan



A phased roadmap to lay the foundation (2025), scale and implement (2026), and embed equitable systems (2027), all rooted in the distinct opportunities and momentum of Downtown Kalamazoo.

| Strategic Pillar                   | 2025  | 2026  | 2027   |
|------------------------------------|---|---|--|
| <b>Built for Business</b>          | Launch monthly business newsletter, develop BRE strategy, and pilot recruitment | Expand business support tools and outreach campaigns                  | Evaluate strategies and embed long-term retention framework          |
| <b>Clean, Safe &amp; Welcoming</b> | Expand waste & recycling, launch Ambassador Program, update Mall Maintenance    | Develop a Bigbelly sponsorship program and maintenance tracking tools | Evaluate effectiveness and public perception of public space program |
| <b>Place with Purpose</b>          | Define placemaking role and develop Downtown Design Guidelines                  | Finalize and publish Downtown Design Guidelines                       | Apply Design Guidelines to public spaces and developments            |
| <b>Streetwise &amp; Connected</b>  | Conduct streetscape audits & identify wayfinding funding                        | Engage consultant in wayfinding master plan study                     | Begin phased signage improvements and early street upgrades          |
| <b>Strong &amp; Sustainable</b>    | Conduct capacity audit to inform 2026 staffing plan and adopt new DDA Plan      | Build staff capacity and refine internal communication systems        | Evaluate staffing model and finalize long-term strategy              |
| <b>Vibrant &amp; Visible</b>       | Develop downtown Kalamazoo brand and public relations strategy                  | Implement phased brand rollout across platforms and spaces            | Begin integrating brand identity into physical space and public life |

# 2025 Work Plan

## Building the Foundation for Downtown's Future

As the first year of our three-year roadmap, 2025 is a foundational year—a time to establish systems, pilot new programs, and align internal and external partners around a shared vision. Our focus in this phase is not only on what we build physically, but also on how we build capacity, trust, and momentum. We are laying the groundwork for long-term success by focusing on key areas across all six strategic pillars:

### Built for Business

- Launch a regular downtown business newsletter
- Begin proactive business outreach and BRE conversations
- Pilot an inclusive business recruitment marketing campaign

### Streetwise & Connected

- Map public realm assets and identify high-priority improvement zones
- Identify fund opportunities to support wayfinding enhancements

### Clean, Safe & Welcoming

- Expand core Ambassador services with updated equipment and onboarding
- Install new waste and recycling bins in key pedestrian areas
- Update the Mall Maintenance Agreement

### Strong & Sustainable

- Conduct a capacity audit assessing staffing needs, workload balance, and operational gaps to develop a staffing plan for 2026.
- Update and adopt a new DDA Development Plan to reflect current goals

### Place with Purpose

- Identify Authorities role in placemaking projects with City
- Begin development of Downtown Kalamazoo Design Guidelines

### Vibrant & Visible

- Develop a downtown brand identity
- Refine Event Sponsorship policy and assessment framework
- Update Downtown Banner program

### 2025 is about ...

- Listening, learning, and co-creating with our community
- Clarifying our roles and responsibilities within the downtown ecosystem
- Making visible improvements that build public trust and engagement
- Setting the stage for scalable, sustainable progress in 2026 and beyond

# Who Makes It Happen

To deliver on this strategic roadmap, the DDA and DEGA will operate with clarity, collaboration, and accountability. This framework defines how governance bodies, staff, and partners contribute to strategic execution and oversight.

## DDA & DEGA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- Provide strategic oversight and fiduciary responsibility.
- Approve the annual work plan, budget, and KPIs.
- Participate in board development and succession planning.
- Set policy direction and ensure alignment with long-term organizational goals.
- Represent the organization publicly and serve as ambassadors for downtown priorities.

## ADVISORY COMMITTEES

- Drive specific initiatives aligned with strategic pillars.
- Support staff in vetting policies, evaluating programs, and community engagement.
- Recommend actions to the full board and offer specialized expertise.
- Collaborate on stakeholder outreach and alignment with organizational goals.

| Committee                        | Primary Strategic Pillar(s) Aligned         |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Events & Marketing               | Vibrant & Visible                           |
| Business Recruitment & Retention | Built for Business                          |
| Clean & Green                    | Clean, Safe & Welcoming                     |
| Executive & Finance              | Strong & Sustainable                        |
| Place Activation                 | Place with Purpose                          |
| Streetscape                      | Streetwise & Connected   Place with Purpose |

## STAFF

- Implement day-to-day work aligned with the strategic plan.
- Coordinate internal workflows, oversee vendor relationships, and manage programming.
- Monitor KPIs and prepare annual progress reports.
- Maintain relationships with public, private, and civic partners.
- Communicate updates regularly to the board and committees.

# How It's Measured

## Turning Vision into Verifiable Impact

Grounding ambition in accountability, this framework ensures we track the progress that truly reflects Downtown Kalamazoo's purpose and priorities. Each strategic pillar is supported by a blend of output and outcome-based Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), offering a clear view of impact while allowing space for learning and adjustment.

### Built for Business

- Business retention rate (% of supported businesses operating after 12 months)
- Number of new businesses recruited or supported annually

### Clean, Safe & Welcoming

- Coverage of Ambassadors by geography
- Public perception ratings on cleanliness and safety (collected annually)

### Place with Purpose

- Number of placemaking activations or improvements completed each year
- Community satisfaction with public spaces

### Streetwise & Connected

- Number of wayfinding elements installed, upgraded, or maintained

### Strong & Sustainable

- Staff capacity growth
- % of operating budget supported through diversified (non-City) sources

### Vibrant & Visible

- Growth in social media engagement (quarterly benchmarks)
- Brand recognition scores (tracked via public perception surveys every two years)

*An annual progress report will be published each March, summarizing results, key learnings, and necessary pivots from the previous year. This report will include visual summaries, spotlight community stories, and track how Downtown Kalamazoo is advancing toward its long-term vision.*

# How It's Funded

## Connecting vision with investment

Downtown Kalamazoo's transformation requires not only vision, but sustained investment and careful stewardship of resources. To implement this roadmap, DEGA and DDA will utilize a blend of public and private resources:



### City and Authority Contributions

Tax Increment Financing revenue through the Downtown Development Authority and Downtown Economic Growth Authority will provide baseline operational and programmatic resources.



### Public-Private Partnerships

Collaboration with institutional anchors, philanthropic organizations, and the private sector will be essential in co-investing in shared priorities such as placemaking, mobility, and business development.



### Grant Acquisition

Competitive grant applications will be pursued to fund strategic enhancements, particularly related to streetscape improvements, small business programs, and clean & safe initiatives. Targeted opportunities will include state and federal programs, as well as foundation funding.



### Sponsorship and Branding Revenue

As the Downtown Kalamazoo brand matures, new revenue opportunities—including advertising partnerships, campaign sponsorships, and donor-driven programs—will support programming and marketing efforts.

## Financial Planning Principles

- **Transparency:** All revenues and expenditures will be documented and reported clearly in public-facing materials.
- **Scalability:** Initiatives will be prioritized based on available funding, with the ability to scale efforts up or down as resources allow.
- **Resilience:** Diversified revenue sources reduce overreliance on any one stream and enhance the organization's ability to weather economic shifts.
- **Responsiveness:** Resources will be regularly evaluated and reallocated in response to emerging needs, opportunities, and community feedback.

# Where We're Going

## Downtown Kalamazoo Beyond 2027

The 2025–2027 Strategic Plan sets a powerful foundation—but it is only the beginning. As Downtown Kalamazoo continues to evolve, so must our vision. Looking ahead to 2035, the DDA/DEGA are committed to building a bold, long-term strategy that guides this momentum into lasting transformation.

This current roadmap is Phase 1 of a decade-long journey. Efforts such as branding, board development, streetscape planning, and business support are laying the groundwork for systemic, scalable transformation.

## How We'll Shape the 2028–2035 Strategy

| Planning Phase                | Timeline                       | Activities   |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|--|
| <b>Phase 1:<br/>2025–2027</b> | <i>Completed<br/>2022–2024</i> | Developed in partnership with Yard & Company through a foundational strategic planning process, and refined in early 2025. Activities included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ecosystem assessment and stakeholder mapping</li><li>• Development of strategic pillars and vision</li><li>• Engagement with board, staff, and civic partners</li><li>• Adoption of work plan and KPIs in 2025</li></ul>   |
| <b>Phase 2:<br/>2028–2031</b> | <i>2027</i>                    | Planning for the second phase will build on early results and momentum. Activities will include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review and synthesis of Phase 1 outcomes and data</li><li>• Stakeholder interviews and partner workshops</li><li>• Updated equity analysis and engagement with underrepresented voices</li><li>• Strategic alignment with infrastructure, branding, and policy timelines</li><li>• Adoption of 2028–2031 work plan by December 2027</li></ul> |
| <b>Phase 3:<br/>2032–2035</b> | <i>2031</i>                    | The final phase will focus on embedding long-term systems and preparing for future strategic cycles. Activities will include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Comprehensive impact evaluation of Phases 1 and 2</li><li>• Community forums, surveys, and idea labs</li><li>• Long-term funding and succession planning</li><li>• Finalization of 2032–2035 plan and transition to next generational vision by December 2031</li></ul>  |

**To:** Downtown Economic Growth Authority Board of Directors  
**From:** Executive Committee  
**Date:** June 9, 2025  
**Subject:** Holiday Lighting Funding – Recommendation for Board Action

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## **Background**

On April 14, 2025, the City of Kalamazoo formally requested \$29,300 in support from the Downtown Economic Growth Authority (DEGA) to fund downtown holiday lighting along South Street, Michigan Avenue, and the Kalamazoo Mall. This funding request supports the City's broader seasonal lighting initiative, which is also backed by \$64,000 in City funds, a pending \$80,000 Gilmore Foundation grant, and \$25,000 in private sponsorships.

The requested DEGA funds would support:

- Installation of existing lighting fixtures along South Street and Michigan Avenue
- Replacement of worn or damaged strands on the Kalamazoo Mall (which is lit year-round)

City staff has confirmed that Elite Creations was selected through a competitive bid process. Their bid for the downtown lighting installation totals \$26,312 for South Street and Michigan Avenue using the City's existing lighting inventory. The remaining \$2,988 would support replacement lighting on the Kalamazoo Mall.

## **Committee Review and Recommendation**

The Events and Marketing Committee reviewed the request and recommended allocating \$25,000 toward the project, pending clarification on how reduced funding would impact the scope.

The Executive Committee supports this recommendation and now brings it to the full Board for consideration and action.

## **Anticipated Impacts of Reduced Funding**

If the Board approves the \$25,000 allocation (rather than the full \$29,300 request), the following reductions are expected:

- No replacement lighting on the Kalamazoo Mall
- Approximately 160 fewer strands of lighting along South Street and Michigan Avenue, impacting visual consistency and reducing holiday lighting coverage.

## **Action Requested**

The Executive Committee recommends that the DEGA Board approve an allocation of \$25,000 toward downtown holiday lighting, with the understanding that the reduced funding may result in more limited lighting coverage.



## OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER

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April 14, 2025

Curtis Aardema, Chair of the DEGA/DDA  
DEGA/DDA Board of Directors

Dear Mr. Aardema,

**We are presenting this request to support the City of Kalamazoo's Downtown holiday lighting and décor for the 2025 season, specifically lighting and décor for the Kalamazoo Mall, Michigan Avenue, and South Street.** For decades, Downtown Kalamazoo has served as the community's central meeting place for authentic family and community experiences during the holiday season. Developed to bring the community together and support the economic growth of Downtown Kalamazoo, these events and décor have a longstanding history of creating traditions and engaging families in free holiday activities, while also connecting local businesses with the community and visitors.

Often, the first signs of the holiday programming occur with the installation of lights and décor in Bronson Park and throughout Downtown Kalamazoo. The Downtown area is brought to life with thousands of lights which decorate several streets. The white lights that decorate the Kalamazoo Mall trees will remain year-round, requiring replacement and maintenance each season. For the 2025 holiday season, additional lights will be installed on Michigan Ave and South Street. These lights are located on the Holly Jolly Trolley route and add to the trolley experience for riders, as well as those traveling from Bronson Park to the Kalamazoo Mall and Santa's Workshop. The City of Kalamazoo's Parks and Recreation Department will coordinate and lead the Bronson Park lighting and décor, as well as the Downtown holiday lighting on the Mall, Michigan Ave, and South Street.

The City of Kalamazoo will continue to support the traditional holiday events and programming, such as Bronson Park Tree Lighting Ceremony, Santa's Workshop, Holly Jolly Trolley, Marketing and Signage for events, and retail holiday support for local businesses. To support these efforts, we are committing up to \$64,000 of funds from the City of Kalamazoo, have submitted a grant request for \$80,000 from the Irving S. Gilmore Foundation, and will be soliciting \$25,000 in sponsorships through a contract with Kalamazoo Experiential Learning Center (KELC). **The City of Kalamazoo is requesting \$29,300 in funding from the DDA/DEGA to support the Downtown (Michigan Ave and South Street) and Kalamazoo Mall portion of holiday lighting for 2025.** Questions should be addressed to Amanda Deters at [detersa@kalamazoocity.org](mailto:detersa@kalamazoocity.org). We deeply appreciate the DDA/DEGA's thoughtful consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

James K. Ritsema, ICMA-CM  
City Manager